Identity

Identity is to do with the imagined sameness of a person or of a social group at all times and in all circumstances; about a person or a group being, and being able to continue to be, itself and not someone or something else. Identity may be regarded as a fiction, intended to put an orderly pattern and narrative on the actual complexity and multitudinous nature of both psychological and social worlds. The question of identity centers on the assertion of principles of unity, as opposed to pluralism and diversity, and of continuity, as opposed to change and transformation.

In one respect, what is at issue is the cultivation and valuation of self-hood and **personal identity**, with a concern for the sameness and continuity of the individual. Interestingly, the OED shows the first uses of the concept of identity with respect to the individual to occur only in the C17. At this time, there came into existence what Stuart Hall calls the ''Enlightenment subject,'' based on ''the conception of the human person as a fully centered, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action . . . The essential center of the self was a person's identity'' (S. Hall, 1992b: 275).

The principle of rationality, the idea of personal identity as ''the Sameness of a rational being'' (Locke, 1690), has been attenuated through the C19 and C20, and the autobiographical self has tended to become organized around a range of other more cultural attributes, such as character, personality, experience, social position, or lifestyle. If there have been significant shifts in the criteria of individual distinction, however, the principles of autobiographical unity and coherence, and of consistency (even accumulation) through time, have remained central to the autobiographical project.

In another dimension, the question of identity concerns particular ways of imagining and instituting social groups and group belonging. In the case of **collective identity**, too, we may say that the principles of unity and continuity have been foregrounded. The logic of identity has worked in favor of integrity and coherence with reference to what came to be figured as the collective self. First, the group has been conceived as a unitary and homogeneous entity, a community of shared substance, and its internal complexity and diversity disavowed; the prevailing images were of a national family, a single body, shared blood, a common home(land). And, second, the group has sought to maintain its culture – its heritage, memories, values, character, particularity, and uniqueness – through time, and to deny the reality of historical change and discontinuity; positive value was placed on the continuity between generations and on the moral force of tradition.

The paradigm case for this particular conception of collective culture has been the nation state, and the ideal of what Benedict Anderson (1983) has famously called "imagined community" (again a relatively modern cultural invention). In this framework, the question of identity has been restricted to the dimension of belonging. Belonging to such a community – a culture in common – has been regarded as the fundamental condition for self-expression and self-fulfillment. As David Miller (1995: 175) puts it, such an identity "helps to locate us in the world," "tell[ing] us who we are, where we have come from, what we have done." While this suggests the meaning and appeal of collective identities for those who belong, we should also recognize the rationale for the collective unit with which they identify. For " 'identities' are crucial tags by which state-makers keep track of their political subjects . . . The kind of self-consistent person who 'has' an 'identity' is a product of a specific historical process: the process of modern nation-state formation" (Verdery, 1994: 37).

Dominant and conventional discourses on identity may be characterized as being essentialist. They make the assumption that the identity and distinctiveness of a person or a group is the expression of some inner essence or property. From such a perspective, identity is a "natural" and "eternal" quality emanating from within a self-same and self-contained individual or collective entity. More recent and critical accounts, however, have tended to adopt an anti-essentialist position, and to emphasize the socially constructed status of all identities. Identities are seen to be instituted in particular social and historical contexts, to be strategic fictions, having to react to changing circumstances, and therefore subject to continuous change and reconfiguration. What is also made clear is that identities cannot be self-sufficient: they are in fact instituted through the play of differences, constituted in and through their multiple relations to other identities. An identity, then, has no clear positive meaning, but derives its distinction from what it is not, from what it excludes, from its position in a field of differences. This may occur at a quite mundane and banal level, in terms of the narcissism of small differences (to use Freud's term), where Britain, say, distinguishes its identity from that of Germany, France, Italy, or Spain. But this logic of distinction may also work in more problematical ways, where

differentiation becomes polarization, with one identity positioned in radical opposition to another – to what is regarded as the fundamental alterity of its other. This is the case, for example, in the revitalized idea of civilizational difference, with its speculations about the escalating "clash of civilizations." Here we should attend to the dark side of identity, to the manner in which, in its strategies of differentiation, identity depends on the creation of frontiers and borders in order to distance and protect itself from the imagined threat of other cultures. The resonant post-September 11 image of a world polarized between civilization (the West) and barbarism (the rest) spoke directly to such anxieties. We may say, then, that there is often fear in the soul of identity.

The question of identity – both individual and collective – has become increasingly salient over the last decade as a consequence of the social and cultural transformations associated with globalization. In the eyes of certain observers, the proliferation of transnational cultural flows (of people, of commodities, of media and information) has seemed to work to destabilize settled and established identities. It has been felt that the national frame, in which people have constructed their identities and made sense of their lives, has been significantly challenged. There has been the sense that societies are becoming more culturally fragmented, while at the same time being increasingly exposed to the homogenizing effects of global markets. It can seem as if older certainties and points of reference are being eroded, to be replaced by a superficial new world of consumer choice and off-the-peg identity options. Globalization is consequently seen as heralding an **identity crisis**. And the response of those who feel that their identities are being thus undermined has often been to hold on to and to reassert their familiar ("traditional") cultures and identities. All around the world, we have seen new mobilizations of **ethnic, cultural, and religious identities**: neo-nationalisms in Eastern Europe, for example, or religious fundamentalisms, from India to the Middle East to the US. What this represents is a defense of the logic of *intégrisme* (to use the F), a militant hanging on to the principle of **identity as self-sameness**.

For other observers, however, global change has seemed to be about something quite different: about the loosening of old identities that had become restrictive and limiting, and about the opening up of new possibilities, involving more complex and variable identifications. From such a perspective, Stuart Hall has argued that we are seeing the emergence of new kinds of postmodern subjects and identities. The situation has become such that "the subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about" (S. Hall, 1992b: 277).

First, there is an emphasis on the multiplicity of possible identifications. Identities may involve national or religious allegiances, but may also be to do with consumer choices, lifestyles, and subcultures, with gender, generation, and sexuality, or with involvement in social movements (environmentalism, anti-globalization activities, hunting or anti-hunting

lobbies). Second, and perhaps more important, this more positive reading of the possibilities of global change draws attention to the different way in which we may now be implicated in social and cultural identities. **Ascribed identities** are seen to be giving way to new possibilities of identification involving choice and negotiation, and in which there is the accommodation of pluralism and diversity (in place of unity) and change and transformation (in place of continuity). The constructed nature of identity is acknowledged and accepted – for some, identity comes to be considered a kind of performance – and this disillusioning process is not regarded as at all problematical: it is possible to recognize that identity is a fiction, and then to live and work with this fiction. Globalization has expanded the repertoire of identity, then, but, more significantly, it has been working to change the basis of our relation to identity.

Kevin Robins

See: ***CIVILIZATION, DIFFERENCE, OTHER, SELF.***

Ideology

The term **ideology** (F *idéologie*) was invented by a group of French philosophers in the lC18 and eC19. These Enlightenment thinkers wanted to bring the new scientific method to an understanding of the mind by offering psychological answers to philosophical questions. Ideology, the science of the mind, was the study of the origin and development of ideas. In particular, these philosophers, known as **ideologues**, traced ideas back to empirical reality and more particularly, following John Locke, to sensations. ''Ideology'' first appeared in English in 1796 in a translation of the work of one of these philosophers, Destutt de Tracy.

It was taken over by Napoleon Bonaparte, who turned the term on its head, using it to attack the defenders of Enlightenment values (especially democracy) because they divorced the problem of governance from ''a knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history'' (R. Williams, 1976: 154). Ideology was abstract knowledge, not rooted in the realities of human life and self-interest. This pejorative use continued and expanded throughout the C19, when ''ideology'' was used, primarily by conservatives, to label any supposedly extreme or revolutionary political theory or platform, especially derived from theory rather than experience.

In a sense, Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels) turned this Napoleonic use on its head (as well as turning Hegel's philosophy, which privileged the reality of ideas over material life and reality, on its head) in the mC19. They returned to the project of the ideologues, offering a theory of the origin and development of ideas, but they located the answers in history and social life. Marx and Engels argued that ideas were nothing but the expression of the material relationships of social life, material relationships ''grasped as ideas.'' There are two distinct **theories of ideology** in their work. In the first, they linked ideology directly to the uneven relations of power. And in the second, ''ideology'' described the